THE SPARROW'S BREAKFAST.

When to the birds their morning meal I threw,
Beside one pretty candidate for bread
There flash'd and wink'd a tiny drop of dew;
But while I gazed, I lost them, both had fled;
His careless tread had struck the blade-hung tear,
And all its silent beauty fell away;
And left, sole relic of the twinkling sphere,
A sparrow's dabbled foot upon a spray.
Bold bird! that didst efface a lovely thing
Before a poet's eyes! I've half a mind,
Could I but single thee from out thy kind,
To mulct thee in a crumb; a crumb to thee
Is not more sweet than that fair drop to me;
Fie on thy little foot and thrumming wing!

CHARLES TENNYSON (TURNER.)

A MOST REMARKABLE WILL.

I.

Miss Bridgita Molloy was a maiden lady of royal descent, who lived at an English watering-place—I really forget whether at Bath, or Clifton, or Cheltenham, or Malvern, or Leamington, or Buxton; but it was at some such place, and luckily the name of the town is the one detail which does not matter. For the sake of avoiding blanks and dashes, I will call it Chatterbury, as more or less applicable to them all—at least, in Miss Molloy's time. She was a little eccentric in trifles; but in all essential things as notoriously whole-minded, and strong-minded too, as any lady of sixty in the whole kingdom. I must enter a little into her family history; but only so far as is needful. She had been the second of three beautiful sisters, the daughters and coheiresses of a gentleman of large estate in Ireland. They were much run after in their girlhood, and had once been known as the three pocket-beauties—less in allusion to their size than to their reputation—then somewhat uncommon in Dublin—of being worth marrying for something more lasting than beauty.

Well to cut a long story short before it is well begun, the eldest, Miss Lucis Molloy (a quaint first name; but it always struck me as a singularly pretty one for a pretty girl), eloped with a gentleman also descended from royalty—so far descended, indeed, that there was scarcely a further social depth left him to descend to—named Fitzgerald O'Birn; and the youngest, Miss Judith, went off with a foreign refugee, a sort of Hungarian-German-Polish dancing master Count, named Ferentz Steldl. Ferentz is the Hungarian for Francis, I believe; Steldl, I fancy, is Bavarian or Tyrolese. Both marriages turned out miserably—so miserably, that Miss Bridgita forswore romance, and even matrimony, and actually kept her vow.

She also kept more than her vow—she kept her fortune. When the creditors got hold of Mr. Molloy's great estates, he left the very handsome surplus left him in cash and Consols absolutely to his one wise daughter. Not a penny went into the pockets of Count Steldl or Mr. O'Birn. It was a bitter disappointment to both gentlemen; and I believe they avenged their wrongs upon their wives after the manner of their kind.

So while poor Madame Steldl suffered and starved all over Europe, and poor Mrs. O'Birn starved and suffered in the larger and darker continent of London, Miss Molloy lived alone and in dignified opulence at Chatterbury. She was a first-rate economist, and her patrimony had prospered. She used to amuse herself by speculating in stock—always shrewdly and cautiously. By the time she was sixty, it was reckoned that her income could not amount to less than a safe twelve hundred a year, of which she saved at least five.

Now what in the world was to become of all this money if Miss Bridgita Molloy ever happened to die?

II.

One afternoon the mail-coach from London set down two gentlemen at the Old Swan, Chatterbury. Both had remarkably little luggage for those days, when men could not run from York to London and back again in a few hours. Both ordered a bed, both walked into the coffee-room, and one of them rang the bell. When the waiter answered it, one of the gentlemen ordered cold brandy, the other hot whiskey. And the waiter's report at the bar was not favorable to either. But with that opinion lack of luggage may have had something to do.

There were other resemblances between the two men. Both were well past middle age; neither looked like one of the hunting men, or officers on half-pay, or rheumatic patients, who formed the bulk of the male visitors to Chatterbury. But there all likeness came to an end. He of the whiskey was a long lean man, with fierce untrimmed whiskers, a shiny bald head, bloodshot blue eyes, and a tell-tale nose, dressed in the height of the fashion, with a tendency to overstepping it into loudness. He had ordered his grog in a thick rich brogue. He of the brandy, on the other hand, was short and squat, with a dirty sallow complexion, thick grizzled hair, and twinkling black eyes. He wore the then unusual ornament, if ornament it be, of a mustache; and, for the rest, was clean, or rather half shaved, and there was something Frenchified about his costume.

'Waitther!' said the Irishman. 'If anybody calls here to-dee or to morrow for Mejor O'Birn,—I'm Mejor O'Birn!'

The other started for a moment, and laid his glass down.

'Shall I comprehend, Monsieur,' he asked, 'that you give your name?'

'Me name? And why wouldn't I give me name?' said O'Birn, with a little leap in his chair. 'Tis none to be ashamed of, anyhow. I'd like to see the man with a name to his back as good as O'Birn!'

'One hundred thousand pardons, Monsieur. I am glad that I know—that is all. Eh, but one hundred thousand pardons, Monsieur Fitzgerald O'Birn.'

The Major's jaw fell, and all his face, save his nose, grew suddenly pale.

'Sure, now, ye're not goin' to tell me ye're one of thim blagyard Jews!' cried he. 'Sure, 'twould be too crool an' all, when Ive come down to see me own wife's sisther, that's rollin' over and over in jools an' gold. An' yeve followed me all the wee down here; an' this is a free country! An' bad luck to the country where an officer an' gentleman mustn't pee a visit to his wife's relations without being hunted by all Jerusalem in full cry! Come, Moses, ye'll give me another dee.'

'Aha! So you think no one shall know your name but the people which shall hold your bills, Monsieur O'Birn? I hold not your bills; I am not fool. You come down to see Mdlle. Bridgita, then, I shall comprehend?'

'Sure, then, 'tis the divvle ye are! But that's better, anyhow, than bein' what I thought ye—'

'You shall not be so sure, Monsieur. I shall know your Christian name, and I shall know the Christian name of the sister of your wife, because I am Ferentz Steldl, Monsieur O'Birn! Aha! you shall have the trembiement perceptible, Monsieur O'Birn!'

'Hwhat!' cried the Major, leaping to his feet with a shout and a glare. 'Ye sit there in cold blood, and ye tell me, Major Fitzgerald O'Birn, ye're that—miscreant—that blagyard—that snake in the grass—that drinkin', swindlin', mane-spirited undher-handed, slandherin', murderin', onrespectable thief of the whole world, Ferentz Steldl? And ye think to escape from the fist of a gentleman this dee?'

'Patience, patience, *mon beau-frere*,' said Steldl without the slightest change of tone 'Fine words shall not butter what you call the *panais*. It is you who shall escape from me. You shall leave this town. I shall guard Mdlle. Molloy, sister of my wife, aunt of my son, from you. For that I am here.'

Something in the significant calmness of his foreign brother-in-law calmed the Major down. He returned to his chair, shifted his glass on the table, and said:

'An' 'tis for that I'm here too,' said he. 'I'm here to defend me own sisther, an' me wife's sisther, an' me gurl's aunt, from all the Counts out of Hungary an' the Siven Dyles. An' ye'll move from your sate if ye dare.'

'I shall not desire,' said Steldl. 'I am well where I am. I desire to have the eye on you, my *beau-frere*. While you shall sit there, I shall sit here, if it shall be to the death, Monsieur O'Birn. It shall be the duel *a la mort*, Monsieur, and we shall fight with the bottoms of the chairs.'

'Then, faith I'll sit like the hen of Banagher—an' she sat till the sod undher her began to crow. So ye think Miss Biddy'll open the crack of her door to the likes of you?'

'Why not? She is sister of my wife, and aunt of my son.'

'Aunt of my daughter, ye mane. Poh! what'd she know of a son of yours?'

'You mock of yourself, my *beau-frere*. Have she not buy my son Ferentz the commission of the Foot, and keep him, so long he see not me?'

'Then ye lie in your throat, Ferentz Steldl! 'Tis me own daughter, an' her own goddaughter an' niece, Lucis Bridgita, that she's kept at school at her own charge, an' keeps in pocket-money as long as I don't see her more than woonst a year.'

'She do that for your daughter? Impossible, Monsieur!'

'She do that for your son? Mr. Steldl, ye lie?'

The way in which these two gentlemen quarrelled, without showing the least sign of coming to blows, gave the waiter, who was not far off, an altogether fresh view of the possibilities of human nature. Obviously there was a world in which these gentlemen cared more for their physical than their moral skins.

'Take yourself off, my *beau-frere*. In effect, she adopt Ferentz, my son. She leave all to him.'

'Ye're a fool, Steldl—that's what she's been makin' of ye, the old screw of the world! As if she'd lave a penny to any but her own niece Lucis, afther doin' all she has for the darlin' child?'

Steldl was the sort of man who would be given to shrugging his shoulders, like a Frenchman in a play: so he no doubt did so now. 'She cannot have done so much for Miss Lucis, or I shall have bear. I know not till now she have done so much for the daughter of the black sheep; but what shall a school-bill be, after all? Bah!—a bagatelle. But a commission in the Foot—ah, that is another shoe! And you consent not to see your own flesh and blood for the sake of a bill of a school?'

'I'm a betther sort of a father than to sthand in me own child's wee of a fortune. And ye sit there an' tell me she's spent the price of a commission on your son—unless 'tis in the Marines, where they'll believe the tale.'

'*Parole de gentilhomme*, Monsieur O'Birn, I am father of Ferentz Steldl, lieutenant of King George—'

'And I of Lucis Bridgita O'Birn, that'll be in the shoes of Miss Molloy.'

The two fathers emptied their tumblers, and the Major rang for more. Neither meant to lose this sitting match if he could help it, that was clear.

'If I didn't know,' said Steldl slowly and impressively, 'there is no school in the land who shall teach for no pay, I shall not believe. But she shall but toss one bone to one hungry dog—that shall be all.'

Now Major O'Birn, though he had never met his brother-in-law in the flesh before, was a citizen of that world which knew that the refugee had taught fencing in his time, and had won several bets that he would make a bullet mark out a pack of cards. So, instead of retorting with a charge of hot whiskey into his brother in-law's yellow face, he contented himself by saying with an angry grin:

'An' what'll ye say when I tell ye my wife is with her own sisther this very dee, as thick as bees in a hive?'

The Irishman, though he had kept his temper the worst, won the match after all. Steldl leapt from his chair with a volley of language that proved his own temper to be no deeper than the thinnest part of his skin.

'Your wife, you fortune-hunting Irish beggar? Your wife with Miss Molloy? So that's why you've been keeping me here?' He threw the rest of his liquor into the fire, and sent a blaze up the chimney. Then he buttoned his coat defiantly, saying: 'I will see Miss Molloy.'

'An' that's what I call mighty waste of good drink,' said Major O'Birn, gulping down the remainder of his own. 'Yes, ye may go, Steldl. I won't bother even to see her door shut in your face—though, faith, it would be fun.'

'And I tell you, Monsieur,' cried Steldl raising his voice into a sort of scream, 'that it is my wife which is now with Miss Molloy!'

The two husbands glared at one another fiercely. And, short of running the risk of being knocked down by the other, that was all left them to do. Words had done their worst; and they were evidently not men of deeds.

No; Miss Bridgita Molloy had not turned out a bad sister after all. She would never even acknowledge so much as the existence of the Major and the Count, and had an odd way of speaking of the married Miss Molloys as if they were widows; but she did not visit the sins of the fathers upon the children. At a very early age, too early for them to make a deliberate choice between their father and their fortunes, she had sent both the little Ferentz and the little Lucis Bridgita to good schools, and, as they grew bigger, sometimes had them to Chatterbury for the holidays to meet their mothers, who accepted the arrangement more reasonably than mothers always will. For that matter, neither Count nor Major cared to be bothered with a baby, nor always with a wife, so that the two young children were removed from evil influence as much as lay in Miss Molloy's power. She was a very strict aunt and a terribly exacting patroness; but she meant to be kind, and was really kind in her own way. I never saw much of the children, but I liked what I did see. Ferentz was a fine, frank, high-spirited young fellow, without any of his father's vices, as is often the way with the sons of prodigal fathers, and Lucis was almost as pretty as her mother had been when she eloped with the Major. Rather a quiet girl, I used to think, but amiable, and with a dash of her aunt Biddy's good sense about her way of speaking. But it was one of Miss Molloy's caprices that the left hand which she held out to one sister should know nothing of how the right hand was held out to the other. Neither mother, neither child was ever her guest at the same time as the other mother and the other child. I doubt if Ferentz knew that he had a cousin Lucis, or she that she had a cousin Ferentz. Most assuredly each of the mothers believed that she alone was favored with her sister's bounty. That reserve was one of Miss Molloy's very strongest foibles, if one may properly call a foible strong. She would never tell even me, her lawyer, more than she thought absolutely necessary about anything; and so of course even she, with all her good business qualities, would sometimes make little mistakes out of which I found it difficult to help her.

And the same course that she pursued with her lawyer she followed with her doctor too—that is to say, with a certain doctor who happened to be a personal friend; for she used to boast that she had never had a medicine-bottle in the house but once, and that she had thrown out of window. She often said that she had nothing of a coffin about her but the strength of its nails; and yet the very first time she was compelled to send for her medical friend in a professional capacity, he found that she must have been suffering for years from a most painful internal and organic disease, and a fatal one. How do hungry relations always hear such news? Had she made her Will? If not, would she recognize the fact that the nature of her disease admitted of no delay? And so, for the first time, Mrs. O'Birn and Mrs. Steldl, at the expense of their husbands' creditors, flew on the wings of sisterly affection, and met together at Miss Molloy's bedside.

It was—for it must have been—a strange meeting between the two forlorn, faded, worse than widowed, half-childless women by the death-bed of one who to them had for many years represented strength, health, comfort—all that they had wanted since they were girls together long and long ago. There they had to sit, one on each side of the bed, conscious of a question she had been commanded by her tyrant to ask, conscious that the other was similarly burdened, unable to ask it in the other's presence, not daring nor knowing how to ask it had she been alone by the bedside. For I declare that even I myself would sooner have led a forlorn hope than have asked Miss Molloy what she meant to do with her money. I like to think of the dismay of the two husbands, but I don't in pity like to think of what the two poor wives must have suffered in silence that afternoon.

I had already—I need not tell anybody who knows places like Chatterbury—been put in the position of being able to report the conversation between the two gentlemen in the coffee-room. They had not spoken in whispers, and the Old Swan had key-holes and its waiter had ears. So I was not very much surprised when, in the course of the evening, I received a summons to attend Miss Molloy.

'Ah!' said her doctor, who was dining with me when the summons came. I report the exclamation, because it was meant to mean a great deal.

'I hope and trust I find you better, Miss Molloy,' said I, when I was shown into her bedroom, which she had not left for some weeks now.

'No, Mr. Lake, you don't,' said she. 'I didn't believe I was a dying woman three hours ago, but I do now. Don't say anything stupid. I've not lived such a bad life that I'm afraid; and I've never been afraid to face anything in my life, except marriage, and I'm not going to begin now.' She was right; with all her little oddities she had been really a good, if somewhat hard-mannered, woman, and always a singularly brave one. 'I know I'm dying, because the hawks and kites are abroad. We used to keep a banshee in the old times, and it's something between a Count and a Major. Those poor silly sisters of mine have been here bothering me to make my will. And if you don't know what that means, Mr. Lake, I do. It means death, as sure as I'm lying here.'

'You mean to say that your sisters have mentioned such a thing?'

It was really not a case for common phrases. Miss Molloy was—Miss Molloy.

'Not in words—no, poor things. But there they sat and cried, and there was nothing but Will—Will—Will, in every tear. 'Tisn't them I blame, though 'tis not nice to be cried over that way. 'Twas as much as I could do not to say Won't—Won't—Won't; but I've always had the wit to hold my tongue. Ah, Mr. Lake, since then I've been thinking how maybe 'tis better to have somebody to drop a real tear over your own self, if 'tis half brandy, and from a Count or a Major, than to have lived in peace only to die all alone. But that's fool's talk; and I didn't ask ye not to talk like a stupid that ye might listen the better to a fool.'

'Surely,' said I, 'you are not alone. Lieutenant Steldl—Miss O'Birn—'

'Pooh! who remembers a dead aunt for a whole day, I'd like to know? Would I want to make a boy and a girl cry before their own troubles come? 'Tis business I sent ye for. There's pens and paper. I am going to make my will.'

'I am sure you are right in that. I am entirely at your service, Miss Molloy.'

'Then,' said she 'I want you to draw my will now. No instructions, mind, to be drafted to-morrow. I might be dead by then—who knows? My pain's almost left me; and that's a bad sign, if death's a bad thing. It will be very short and very simple. Take a sheet of the big foolscap—that'll be plenty. Now write: "This is the last Will and Testament of Bridgita"—mind ye spell it with a "ta," not a "da"; and with only one "t," mind; for I'm particular about that way, for 'tis the way my mother spelt it, right or wrong—"of Bridgita Molloy, of Chatterbury, in the county of"—whatever it was—"spinster"; praise glory for that, anyhow! But ye needn't put that in—the glory, I mean. "Spinster: I give and bequeath to Rachel Andrews, my housekeeper, the sum of three hundred pounds, free of legacy duty, and I request her to take charge of my dog Dash, knowing that she will fulfil my request according to the intention wherewith I make the same. I give and bequeath to every person who shall have been in my service for one month preceding my decease the amount of one year's wages. I give and bequeath to my friend John Kirwan, of Chatterbury, Doctor of Medicine, the sum of five hundred pounds, free of legacy duty. I give and bequeath to my brother-in-law, Ferentz Steldl the elder"—is it all right, so far?'

'Quite. But how do you spell Ferentz?' asked I.

'"F, e, r, e, n, t, z"—Ferentz Steldl. The boy's name is Firentz, with an "i." I won't have him bear his father's name. "My brother-in-law, Ferentz Steldl, the elder, the sum of one shilling, free of legacy duty, to buy a mourning-ring. I give and bequeath to my brother-in-law, Fitzgerald O'Birn, the sum of one shilling, free of legacy duty, to buy a mourning-ring. I give and bequeath to my dear nephew, Firentz"—with an "i"—Steldl, Lieutenant in the Army, the sum of one thousand pounds. I give and bequeath to Lucis Bridgita O'Birn, my niece, the sum of one thousand pounds. And all the residue of my property, whether real or personal, I give, bequeath, and devise to—"'

She paused. Up to this point she had not needed my help, so expert she seemed in the art of the testator.

'"Devise to,"' echoed I. 'Well, Miss Molloy?'

The residuary legatee was to be the important personage; for he or she would come in for at least twenty-five thousand pounds, and perhaps a good deal more, after all debts and legacies were paid.

But still she paused. All the rest had been mere child's play.

'Mr. Lake,' she said at last, 'I may be dying, but I'm not an old woman, and I might live for years. Now my sisters are gone, I feel less like dying than I did when I sent for ye to make my will. I've done all the justice I need do: and I don't want a handsome property to be split up—that would be a sort of a shame. Neither Firentz nor Lucis has any expectation of getting what I may have to leave, whatever others may. It's for the sake of the property that it must go into one hand. And, Mr. Lake, I daren't trust the very walls of my bedroom with the name I choose. If I was to ask you to write the name in my will, I should have to speak it to you, and for aught I know the Count or the Major may have bribed the nurse to listen at that very door.'

'Write it down for me, then; here is the pen.'

'No. The paper might get dropped about, and—no; I'd rather you wouldn't know the name. It isn't that I don't trust ye, but ye might say it out in a dream, and your wife might hear it, and she might let it out by some chance to somebody who might talk about it in a place like Chatterbury, and then the Count or the Major would get at the secret as sure as ye're alive. And then there's no counting the villanies that wouldn't be done; they'd be trying to get me shut up in a madhouse, and forging and murdering some one maybe; anyhow there'd be no comfort in living, if I am to live any more. I've thought of a way to keep off all danger, and to make it everybody's interest to support the will, and to save every bit of bother. I'll write the name myself in the will with my own hand, and then cover it over while ye write the rest and ye'll give me your word of honor ye won't try to see what I've written till I'm dead and gone.'

The whim was a stupid one, I thought, for a testator who was in other respects proving herself so clear-headed; but there was certainly no apparent harm in indulging her. 'But,' said I, 'as you wish to take such extreme precautions, does it not strike you that it is easier for an expectant heir to overhaul a will than for a solicitor to break confidence in a dream?'

'I've thought of all that,' said she. 'Of course they'll try to overhaul, and where there's a will there's a way—but there's more ways of killing a dog than hanging him. I'll manage so that if every servant in the house is in the Count's pay or the Major's, they shall earn their money for nothing at all. So I'll take the pen, if ye please, and the will; give me a dip of ink, and any scrap of paper ye find handy.'

I gave her all she asked for. She first of all, very slowly, wrote down upon the scrap of paper what was presumably a rough draft of what she was going to enter in the will. Then she copied it into the document even yet more slowly, dwelling, as it seemed, upon every letter.

She thrust the scrap of paper on which she had made her first memorandum under her pillow, and then carefully folded the will itself so that I could see nothing without deliberately beaking my word. Dr. Kirwan and myself were appointed executors; and the execution of the will was witnessed by the nurse and a neighbor. There was certainly nothing remarkable about Miss Molloy's will so far but the excessive care she had taken that its principal provision should not even be guessed at until she died.

Nor did Miss Molloy die quite so soon as everybody had expected. The Count and the Major, finding a protracted stay at the Old Swan beyond their means, had parted, deadly enemies—all the more deadly because each inspired the other with a feeling of mortal terror. I am very much afraid that both Mrs. Steldl and Mrs. O'Birn had to bear, at her husand's hands, the burden of punishment for the sins of her brother-in-law. But, however that may be, the day came at last when I heard from Dr. Kirwan the long-expected news that my client, Miss Bridgita Molloy, was alive no more.

'She couldn't have lasted another week,' said he. 'But all the same, I might have kept her going for another day or two, with care. Would you believe it, but the obstinate old lady, only the night before last, gave her nurse the slip, and, weak as she was, went all over the house to see if everything was in order! Death was a relief to her, and she was a queer old lady in some ways—and the worst patient in all the town—but I'm sorry she's gone.'

And that, I am afraid, was the only note of honest mourning which Miss Molloy, with all her many virtues and her singularly few weaknesses, was privileged to receive. She had always hidden her good qualities out of public sight; and hardness of manner, like charity, covers a great deal.

To the last she had stuck to her will. It was found under her pillow when she died, sealed up in a large blue envelope, and indorsed: 'My Will—B. M.' I own it was with some curiosity that I opened it; for she had made such a mystery of what should have been a very simple piece of business, that I had some misgivings lest she should have disinherited niece and nephew alike, and made her dog Dash or some Anti-Matrimonial Society her residuary legatee. My own sympathies were with Miss Lucis; my wife's with Lieutenant Firentz Steldl. That was a little matter of human nature; as a matter of reason, we felt that they had equal claims, and that twenty-five thousand pounds would have borne equal partition very well.

So I broke open the envelope, unfolded the will, and read:

'. . . And all the residue of my property, whether real or personal, I give, bequeath, and devise to G P X D N W M D Y B D O V J W D M I H T I D Z X Z.'

III.

That was the bequest—as clear to the sight as it was dark to the mind. Had I been mistaken, and had Miss Molloy been insane after all? If that were so, every penny of the five-and-twenty thousand pounds would have to be divided between the Count and the Major, as the husbands of her next of kin. No, surely that insanity was impossible.

I twisted the document up and down, and round and round. Those letters still obstinately remained as they were; the alphabet, at any rate, had gone mad, unless it was I who had gone insane. I needed some evidence of my own senses, and carried the will straight to my co-executor, Dr. Kirwan.

'She was an odd old lady!' said he at last. 'But I'll bear witness in any court you like that she was as sane as anybody that ever made a will.'

'But what's to be done?'

'Ah, what indeed? What's the effect of this will as it stands?'

'I'm just hanged if I know. The will's otherwise without a flaw. And in all my practice, and all my reading too, I never heard of the alphabet's being made a residuary legatee. I don't like to say, without consideration, that there's no principle a court of equity would go upon; but I don't know of one I don't see even how it would come within the doctrine of *Cy Pres*.'

'What's that?'

'Why, that when the conditions of a gift can't be literally carried out, the Court of Chancery will decree some method conformable to the general object, and following the intentions of the donor as nearly as possible.'

'Then,' said Dr. Kirwan, 'I should say the Court would apply the estate to the foundation of a college for the study of conundrums. But—holloa, Lake, here's something else dropped out of the envelope; perhaps it's the answer. It's a letter addressed to you.'

That, also, was sealed. When I opened it, I found only these words:

'If you are puzzled, lift up the carpet in the drawing-room in the corner between the fireplace and window, under the chiffonier.—B. M.'

We went together straight to the house of the late Miss Molloy, and, according to our instructions, turned up the carpet in the corner of the drawing-room. Sure enough, we found another sealed note addressed to me.

'Look,' we read, 'at page 173 in the second volume of Gibbon's "Decline and Fall." It is on a shelf in the breakfast-room.—B. M.'

I was too vexed at all this folly and mystification to smile.

'By Jupiter!' exclaimed the doctor, 'this accounts for that midnight ramble over her house just before she died. She was writing these notes and hiding them. Poor old lady—it's not an uncommon thing, though, for people on their death-beds to fancy themselves surrounded by spies and enemies. It isn't lunacy, though, eh?'

'But it's the cause of lunacy in others,' grumbled I. 'Well, now for Gibbon.'

And there, exactly on page 173 of volume ii., was yet a third sealed note for me. And this ran:

'Key behind wainscot three inches toward cupboard from dressing-room window.—B. M.'

'At last!' said I. 'I was afraid we were going to be sent up all the chimneys before we'd done.'

'By Jupiter, Lake, just think what would have happened if there'd been one link missing; if one of these pillar-to-post notes had been lost or gone out of the way!'

'It's too terrible a chance to talk of. It would have cost one of those young people near twelve hundred a year. Come, here's the dressing-room; let's be quick and have done with the whole thing.'

'All right; here's a loose board, just where we were told to go. Come, out with you! Hold a match down, this is rather a dark hole. There—and here's—holloa!'

Dr. Kirwan pulled out a fragment of an envelope to which the red sealing wax still clung, and on which I could read a part of my own name. There were also some odds and ends of blank paper scattered round. We pulled out all that was there. Alas, the fate of the key was only too plainly to be learned from the torn and half-eaten scraps of envelope and note-paper we found.

A scuttering and scrambling behind the wainscot mocked us with the certainty that the Mice had swallowed the Key.

IV.

What was to be done now? The mice alone knew to whom Miss Bridgita Molloy's money belonged. The letters of the alphabet took to waltzing with the multiplication table in my dreams. I did not know what to do. I got a box of ivory letters and tried all sorts of anagrams, but could make nothing out of five-and-twenty letters, with only four vowels among them, and with so many z's and x's. I proved the will in fear and trembling, fully expecting that the question of the soundness of the mind of the testatrix would be immediately raised by one or both of her brothers-in-law, who had of course been made aware of the contents, and were in possession of those letters without meaning. But, strange to say, no steps were taken whatever. It was not for a week, at least, after the will had been proved that I received a visit from Steldl the elder, accompanied by a dapper and smartly dressed young man, whom he introduced to me as Mr. Withers, from the office of Withers & King. I supposed he was the legal adviser of the Steldl claim.

'You shall wonder, Mr. Lake,' said the Count. 'why I not think Miss Molloy what you call mad woman. Not at all. I think of that once; but then that give half the money to that vermin, Fitzgerald O'Birn who shall lose it in every vile way. I say it shall be a good will. I take advice, I; and I demand you pay all what shall be left to my son, Ferentz Steldl—'

'Wait a bit,' said I. 'He has already received his legacy of a thousand pounds.'

'Bah! what shall be one thousand pound? He is what you call residuary legatee of Miss Molloy.'

'I wish he were, with all my heart! But we must go to Chancery. There's nothing else to be done.'

'No. He shall not go in Chancery. He shall have his right and his due. I am his father, Monsieur.'

'When you can read those confounded letters into Ferentz Steldl, I'll pay him every penny with all my heart, and take the consequences; but not a minute before.'

'Very good, Mr. Lake. Then I shall read them into Ferentz Steldl, and without magic; and then you shall pay. Now, Mr. Withers, if you please.'

'Mr. Withers is your solicitor, I presume?'

'I have not the honor,' said Mr. Withers glibly, 'to be in the profession—in your profession, sir, that is to say. We are a firm of professional experts, sir. We practise the science of autography, and we collect and deal in the autograph letters of celebrated historical persons. Naturally our business has occasionally included the branch of cryptography—of the construction and solution of ciphers, which, though requiring a certain special aptitude as well as experience, is not so difficult as laymen might suppose, and is as certain in its results as arithmetic itself—beautifully certain, sir. Our friend Mr. Steldl has applied to me for the missing key of this little puzzle, and it took me barely half an hour's study to find.'

'You mean you can read this jumble into sense?' asked I. 'You must be a clever fellow, Mr. Withers. How am I to know it isn't guess-work? The correctness of your reading will have to be proved, you see.'

'Up to the hilt, sir. The beauty of a cipher, or cryptograph, is that, if you once hit on the right key, it can only mean just that one thing—no doubt, no ambiguity. And as the discovery of the key is a logical process, and as no cipher can possibly have more than one key, why, sir, *solvitur ambulando*—the result is proved by the process, sir; or rather, result and process prove one another.'

'Then I must have your process, if you please.'

'To be sure. No patent. Anybody can do it. This cipher, sir is even absurdly simple. Did you ever read the "Gold Bug" of Edgar Allan Poe? No? That's a pity, because I shall have to explain from the beginning. I have rather a contempt for that story—the cipher he makes his hero discover would have been found out by a child in half the time. And this cipher before us is of precisely the same kind—the very simplest form of cipher known.'

'Well?'

'A person like Miss Molloy, presumably ignorant of the beautiful science of cryptography, would be almost certain to adopt the plan of making one letter do duty for another. Of course she has left no spaces between her words. Now, you know that the commonest English letter is e; so that, ten to one, the commonest letter in the cipher will represent e. That letter is d. It comes no fewer than five times in the twenty-five. So, ten to one, d stands for e. You perceive?'

'At any rate, I follow, so far.'

'Very good, sir. Now look at the cipher well, and keep it before your eyes. We'll assume for the moment that d may mean e; and if d means e, it's likely enough a would be b, b would be c, and so on, and so on, taking the letter following. Let's try that dodge with m, because there's more than one m, and because n (which it ought to stand for) is a commonish sort of letter. Very well. Putting e for d and n for m and dots for the other letters, we get: ...e..ne..e....en....e... Now, Mr. Lake, the question, as I understand it, is: Did Miss Molloy leave her money to Lucis Bridgita O'Birn or to Ferentz Steldl? Assuming that one of those e's must fall into where the name of the legatee must come, it will strike you at once that there isn't one single e in the lady's name. It will also strike you that the young gentleman is a nephew, and that we've got already ne—coming together. Let's chance it. Let's write "nephew" right out, and see if we get sense that way. It'll come like this, putting p for y, h for b, w for o: ...e..nephew...en....e... Now, what strikes you next, sir?'

'Nothing whatever, Mr. Withers. Nothing at all.'

'No? I'm surprised. Doesn't it strike you that en comes in Ferentz; that the cipher and the name of Steldl both end in a letter between a pair of letters—zxz: ldl? A most remarkable hint, indeed; for it interferes with no former assumption—z would mean l: x would mean d. Now look how it reads: ...e.r-nephew f.rentz steldl. Only one thing bothers me. Where the dot comes now in f.rentz there ought to be a d to represent an e. In reality there's a j. But that's a trifle; doubtless a clerical error. The whole thing's as plain as a pikestaff. Substituting letter for letter, and never mixing them, here you are: my dear nephew, Ferentz Steldl; and there you are!'

I was certainly surprised at the fellow's ingenuity. Except for that missing e, the process was without a flaw; and when we see a logical and faultless process arriving at a probable conclusion, what are we to say? And, by Jove! Miss Molloy had made a particular point of spelling Ferentz, Firentz—with an i. Look back at the draft of the will, and see. That was downright proof, if any was needed; the j in the cipher, hitherto unaccounted for, would be i. The very simple little process had all the air of a miracle to me. I knew nothing then of the far greater marvels wrought by antiquarians in rougher and larger fields, or I should, perhaps, have been less surprised.

'It is read, Monsieur,' said Steldl pere, with a bow.

I was a little sorry for Miss Lucis; but I didn't grudge her cousin his good luck, and I was intensely relieved. I was thinking of the effect of all this as evidence. Steldl was looking at me in dignified triumph, Mr. Withers was regarding his success with artistic pride, when my clerk brought in a card—Major Fitzgerald O'Birn.

I thought best to have everything out and over then and there; so, without considering the presence of his brother-in-law and enemy, I had him ushered in.

'Good-dee to ye, Mr. Lake,' said he, without deigning to notice, or even to see, Mr. Steldl, who, for his part, threw a double dose of benignity into his smile. 'I suppose ye've been wondherin why I didn't go in for provin' poor Miss Biddy *non compos*—wake in the top, ye know. As if I'd consent to go halves with a dirthy, mane, intriguing baste of a fellow that she'd cut off with a shilling with her own hand! All or none—that's the war-cry of the O'Birns! So I've just dropped in, on my wee, to as'k ye for that twenty-five thousand that's due to Lucis, my daughther; and I'll take it hot with—I mane short, if ye plase. Or, if ye haven't it all in your pocket, a thrifle on account 'll do for to-dee.'

'I'm sorry for Miss O'Birn,' said I. 'But—she's had her thousand pounds—'

'——her thousand pounds! I wouldn't give sixpense for a beggarly thousand pounds. 'Tis an insult to spake to a gentleman of such a sum.'

'Her thousand pounds, and—I'm afraid—this gentleman, Mr. Withers, will explain—there is no longer any doubt of Miss Molloy's intentions. Lieutenant Steldl is residuary legatee.'

'An' who's Mr. Withers? Is it in a conspiracy ye'll be, with your heads as thick together as pays in one shell? Why, 'tis plainer than blazes that gpx sthands for Lucis O'Birn. What do ye see to that, sir, eh?'

'I'm afraid it doesn't,' said I.

'You're a pretty fellow for a lawyer! But I suppose ye'll have to believe what's proved. Higgins, ye're wanted!' shouted he.

He, too, it seemed, had brought a friend with him—a little pinched, shabby, elderly man, with red squinting eyes.

'I'll introjuce ye to me friend Higgins—a gentleman and a scholar, that'll rade ye off Hebrew into Chinese for a glass of punch, an' back into Hebrew for two. Faith, I'd like ye to find a question that Higgins wouldn't answer ye off-hand. Says I to him: "Higgins, what does gpx spell?" An' says he: "Just Lucis O'Birn."'

A smile of amused contempt came into the face of smart Mr. Withers.

'An expert?' asked he.

'An' pray who may you be, sir?' asked Major O'Birn. 'D'ye mane to tell me ye haven't heard of Higgins—that ought to be a docther of divinity and a member of Parlimint, and could see ye undher the table whenever ye plase?' Having thus annihilated Mr. Withers, 'Higgins, do your duty,' said he.

'There's nothing in it—nothing in it at all,' said Mr. Higgins, in a queer squeak, and in a shuffling sort of tone. 'What's the difficulty in reading that cipher I am at a loss to conceive. Do you mean to tell me that there is anybody on earth, except Major O'Birn, who has found the slightest difficulty in reading what couldn't puzzle, for more than half a second, anybody but a born fool?'

'You are pleased to be complimentary, Mr. Higgins,' said I. 'Mr. Withers, as an expert, assures us that a cipher can only be read in one way.'

'It didn't want an expert to tell you that,' said Mr. Higgins testily. 'Of course you can only read a cipher in one way. How can one set of symbols stand for two different sets of words?'

'Then you will agree with Mr. Withers?'

'No doubt. If Mr. Withers has read the cipher he will agree with me. A cipher is made to a particular key, and it can't be fitted with two. When old women make ciphers, they mostly change the letters by counting forward or backward. So first I counted one forward, and made g mean h; that came to nothing. Then two forward, and made g mean i; nothing again. J—no. K—no. Then I tried the fifth letter forward—l. According to that rule, g would be l: p would be u: x (making a follow z) would be c. Next comes d, which would be i: then n, which would be s—the true letter being always the fifth letter from the cipher forward. Follow it out, gentlemen, and see for yourselves.'

I did as he bade me. And the cipher read, letter by letter, as follows, with the peculiar spelling of the name of the testatrix and all:

GPXDN WMDYBDOV JWDMI HT
LUCIS BRIDGITA OBIRN MY
IDZXZ.
NIECE.

There was no more doubt that the cipher was this than it was My dear nephew, Firentz Steldl. It meant both equally, and both at the same time!

I put it to every cryptologist in the world, is it within the bounds of credibility that a cipher of twenty five letters should be readable in two exactly opposite and inconsistent ways, and that its two irreconcilable solutions should be gained by following two simple principles, both equally obvious and equally sound? Incredible—nay, impossible! will be the unanimous answer. And yet the impossible, by a marvellous chain of coincidences, was effected in that will of Miss Molloy. She could not intentionally have brought about such a result, even if she had tried. The i for the e in Ferentz, or rather Firentz, left no room for doubt that Withers's solution was true. On the other hand, the peculiar spelling of Bridgita was an unanswerable argument in favor of Mr Higgins. Withers had started on the principle which has amused so many readers of Edgar Poe, and is in itself a perfectly true and sound one. Higgins had started on the principle favored by simpletons who correspond in cipher in the agony columns, and imagine that their silly secrets are not open to anybody who takes five minutes' trouble to read them.

What was to be done—now?

Clearly the situation was not realized by either of the fathers of the rival legatees. But a gloom came over the face of Mr. Withers. He took up the paper on which Mr. Higgins had written his solution, and examined it intently.

'No sane woman would have used such a simple cipher as that,' said he. 'It is just the solution that would satisfy an amateur.'

'True,' said Mr. Higgins with a slight sneer. 'Jurymen are in the position of amateurs, I believe, and judges too.'

'A cipher can't have two solutions,' said Mr. Withers, throwing the paper down.

'True again,' said Mr. Higgins. 'Happily for Miss O'Birn.'

'Have you studied cryptology as a science, Mr. Higgins?' asked Mr. Withers, with a wild effort at elaborate courtesy.

'I'm not such an ass,' said Mr. Higgins with no pretence of courtesy at all. 'I'd as soon set up a science of handwriting as a science of whims.'

'You are insulting, sir! There is a science of handwriting—ay, and of character in handwriting; and I shouldn't like to write like you, judging from what it's like to be.'

'I always make it a point of insulting quacks and humbugs,' said Mr. Higgins. 'It's the first duty of man. I've read that cipher in the way that would satisfy anybody but an expert, and there's an end.'

'Whom do you call a quack, sir? Let me tell you that when a man deliberately insults my science, I—I—feel it my duty to knock him down.'

'Gentlemen—gentlemen!' I cried out, 'you have both been very clever—a great deal too clever for me. I would gladly have accepted either of your readings, Heaven knows. But I can't accept both; and both your reasons are so admirable that I can't accept either. And what's worse, it's your arguments, not your assertions, that will have to go into Chancery; and into Chancery we must all go. Yes, there's no help for it now; and, once in, Heaven alone knows when we shall get out again.'

'I object to the law on principle; I shall have nothing to do with law,' said Steldl; and I have no doubt but he had excellent reasons for the only principle I ever heard of his having. 'I bring my expert; you are satisfied. I demand twenty-five thousand pounds for my son.'

'I despise the law,' shouted the Major. 'An Irish gentleman doesn't mix up with pettifogging rascals. I wouldn't touch the dirthy thing with the end of an old boot. 'Tis as clear as day—Lucis Bridgita O'Birn.'

'It must be compromise, or—Chancery,' said I. 'Have it as you will.'

'Compromise—with him?' said Steldl, pointing to the Major with his thumb. 'Not one penny shall he rob my son.'

'Compromise—with a Steldl?' said the Major in his turn. 'Maybe with old Nick I would; for old Nick's a gentleman,' added he.

And there was the deadest lock I ever heard of since I was born! No Lord Chancellor ever drew up a will that most clearly meant two opposite and irreconcilable things. And so, I verily believe, should we have been standing at this triangular deadlock at the present hour, had not the delay itself brought about a most natural solution in the most natural way in the world. 'When in doubt, do nothing.' I constantly find to be the wisest maxim that ever was made.

My relief, at the time, hardly equalled my surprise. But, considering that Mrs. Steldl and Mrs. O'Birn had never quarrelled—considering that they had met again—considering what sort of young people their son and their daughter were—I must own that I was an ass to feel surprised on learning of the marriage of Lieutenant Steldl to Lucis Bridgita O'Birn. The history of the Montagues and the Capulets does not stand alone in the effect of the feuds of the old upon the hearts of the young. But this is no part of my story. Enough that her claims became his, while his remained his own—and therefore her own, too. And if two elderly rascals were kept in somewhat disreputable clover for the rest of their days, and if two executors were content to run a little safe risk in making things comfortable all round for everybody, themselves included, and if two cryptologists remained irreconcilable foes, and if two young people became happy in their own peculiar way, and if the Court was deprived of a big cause, and the profession of the bulk of the property of Miss Molloy—well, the fault is mainly my own. I protest only to tell the story, not to solve the mystery, of Miss Molloy's most Remarkable Will.—[London Society.

A PERSIAN APOLOGUE.

Melek the Sultan, tired and wan,
Nodded at noon on his divan.
Beside the fountain lingered near
Jamil the bard, and the vizier—
Old Yusuf, cross and hard to please;
Then Jamil sang in words like these:
Slim is Butheina—slim is she
As boughs of the Arâka tree!
"Nay," quoth the other, teeth between,
"Lean, if you will—I call her lean."
Sweet is Butheina—sweet as wine,
With smiles that likered bubbles shine!
"True, by the Prophet!" Yusuf said,
"She makes men wander in the head!"
Dear is Butheina—ah! more dear
Than all the maidens of Kashmeer.
"Dear," came the answer, quick as thought,
"Dear, and yet always to be bought."
So Jamil ceased. But still Life's Page
Shows diverse unto Youth and Age:
And, be the song of Ghouls or Gods,
Time, like the Sultan, sits..and nods.

AUSTIN DOBSON.

ALEXANDRA AND HER DAUGHTERS.

From The Figaro.

The Marquis Du Lau owns a statuette of white marble by a celebrated sculptor. It represents a lady of the Court of Henry II. Her frail and pliant figure is moulded in a long brocade petticoat, slightly turned up on one side. Her bust is encased in a stiff waist, loaded with precious stones. The head is delicate and noble, with a profile of the Renaissance, and her features are chiselled as finely as a cameo. A cap adorned with streaming feathers hides a portion of her hair. Such is this statuette—a jewel become a woman—a little fairy—half object of art, half apparition. It is the portrait of Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales by M. D'Epinay. An exquisite and truly royal image, representing better than any other an almost supernatural beauty.

Once descended from her pedestal the princess becomes a gentle, kind young woman, a careful mother and an unpretending, almost citizen-like housewife. It is noticeable that when people seek to praise a princess they call her citizen-like, while in praise of an ordinary citizen's wife they will say that she is a princess in manner. A blending of these two qualities, so vastly different from one another, is necessary to the real gentlewoman. She must be a princess in heart, in soul, in generous sentiments, in courage and in appearance, and a *bourgeoise* in hospitality, in the love of the fireside, in the care of her children and in principles of wise economy.

Every morning at 9 o'clock the three daughters of the Princess of Wales take their music lesson. They have "Mamma" waked up, who, a few moments later, appears in her dressing-gown and remains with them till the lesson is over. Nothing interests the Princess more than the education of her daughters. In music she can fully appreciate their progress, being herself a consummate musician. Her delicate, dreamy, thoroughly Danish nature betrays itself in her touch. She dotes, above all, on the melodies of Chopin and Schumann, and she plays them with wonderful talent.

The three young Princesses, Louise, Victoria and Maud, differ as greatly in character as in physiognomy. The eldest, Louise, has the fine features and the grace of her mother; she is gentle, gay and affable, in short the Parisienne of the three. Victoria, the second daughter, is the image of her father. She is proud, rather reserved and attaches herself little to people. When she does grow fond of someone, however, her affection never wavers. She unites to a thorough consciousness of her own dignity a generous heart, easily moved. Her intellect, which is greatly developed, only renders her the more engaging. The youngest sister, Princess Maud, can still be called a baby. She is but ten years of age. In appearance she bears a great likeness to her grandmother, the Queen. She is good-hearted, and at times even a little serious.

The private apartments of the Princess of Wales, both at Sandringham and at Marlborough House, are fitted up completely in the French style. One would believe oneself transported to a mansion in the Champs-Elysees. Scattered about everywhere on plush-covered tables are an infinity of knick-knacks, such as small porcelain dogs, bird-cages with stuffed birds, figures in Dresden china, tiny flowerstands of Faience or Sevres, inkstands, blotters, knives and what not, just as in the shops of the Rue de la Paix. The Princess's writing paper always comes from Paris, as well as her dressing tables and all the latest fashionable baubles. Her different pieces of furniture are surrounded by low screens, which, in many cases, she herself has embroidered. Many objects in ivory, enamel, silver and mother of pearl recall Prince "Bertie's" voyage to India.

Friendship, grace and kindness—such is the motto of that royal home, where Paris is proud to occupy so large a space.

HOW THIERS GOT HIS FAVORITE DISH.

From The Manchester Times.

Not only are the French people fond of dining and connoisseurs in dining, but they may be appealed to on their gastronomic side. For instance, nothing pleased them better in M. Thiers than his well-known partiality for the good things of life. M. Thiers' great weakness was a dish, strictly Provençal and essentially vulgar, called brandade, consisting of salt cod and oil skilfully combined. Doctors in late years forbade M. Thiers to eat cod in any shape or form, and, much as he wished for it, Madame Thiers was inflexible. But M. Thiers had an ally, M. Mignet, and from time to time this gentleman used to reach the Hotel St. Georges with a voluminous parcel under his arm. He would bow rapidly to the ladies, and pass into the great man's study. Then an urgent plea of important work was put forward, the doors were locked, and intruders sent away.

Directly they were alone the two friends undid the parcel, which was simply a tin box wrapped in a newspaper, and containing an unctuous brandade, made by the best Provencal cook in Paris. With lingering delight the friends consumed this forbidden delicacy; and, when the box was entirely empty and the doors were unlocked, Thiers would be heard exclaiming: "My dear Mignet, it is the masterpiece of human genius!" And everyone thought he referred to some great literary achievement. But Madame Thiers one day caught the two culprits at their work, and reproached M. Mignet so severely that after that he never dared enter the hotel with a parcel under his arm.

FRANK BUCKLAND'S ECCENTRICITIES.

From Macmillan's Magazine.

His zeal frequently led him into imprudences which would have told severely on a less robust constitution, and which perhaps had the effect of shortening his own life. He has been known to wade up to his neck in water, and change his clothes driving away from the river on the box of a fly. This was an exceptional case; but it was a common thing for him to sit for hours in wet boots. He rarely wore a great coat; he never owned a railway rug; he took a delight in cold, and frequently compared himself to a Polar bear, which languished in the heat and revived in the frost. The pleasure which Mr. Buckland derived from cold accounted for many of his eccentricities. Even in winter he wore the smallest amount of clothing; in summer he discarded almost all clothing. Those were very rare occasions on which he wore a coat at home. His usual dress was a pair of trousers and a flannel shirt; he deferred putting on socks and boots till he was starting for his office. Even on inspections he generally appeared at breakfast in the same attire, and on one occasion he left a large country house, in which he was staying, with no other garments on. While he was driving in a dogcart to the station he put on his boots, and as the train was drawing up to the station, at which a deputation of country gentlemen was awaiting him, he said with a sigh that he must begin to dress. Boots were in fact his special aversion. He lost no opportunity of kicking them off his feet. On one occasion, travelling alone in a railway carriage, he fell asleep with his feet resting on the window-sill. As usual, he kicked off his boots and they fell outside the carriage on the line. When he reached his destination the boots could not, of course, be found, and he had to go without them to his hotel. The next morning a platelayer examining the permanent way came upon the boots, and reported to the traffic manager that he had found a pair of gentleman's boots, but that he could not find the gentleman. Some one connected with the railway recollected that Mr. Buckland had been seen in the neighborhood, and, knowing his eccentricities, inferred that the boots must belong to him. They were accordingly sent to the Home Office and were at once claimed.

We have said that he rarely wore a greatcoat, and when he did so it was apparently more for the value of the additional pockets it contained than for its warmth. One of his good stories turned on this. He had been in France, and was returning via Southampton, with an overcoat stuffed with natural history specimens of all sorts dead and alive. Among them was a monkey, which was domiciled in a large inside breast-pocket. As Buckland was taking his ticket, Jocko thrust up his head and attracted the attention of the booking-clerk, who immediately (and very properly) said, "You must take a ticket for that dog, if it's going with you." "Dog!" said Buckland; "it's no dog; it's a monkey." "It is a dog," replied the clerk. "It's a monkey," retorted Buckland, and proceeded to show the whole animal, but without convincing the clerk, who insisted on five shillings for the dog-ticket to London. Nettled at this, Buckland plunged his hand into another pocket and produced a tortoise, and laying it on the sill of the ticket-window said, "Perhaps you call that a dog too." The clerk inspected the tortoise. "No," said he, "we make no charge for them—they're insects."

He could not, in the most serious conversation, refrain from his joke; and some persons will recollect how on one occasion he was descanting, at a formal meeting, on the advantages which would ensue from the formation of a fishery district. "You will be appointed a conservator, and then you will impose license duties, and the money—probably £300—will be paid to you." "And what shall I do then?" inquired his listener. "Why, then," replied Mr. Buckland, "you had better bolt with it."

His love of a joke distinguished him as a lecturer. The excuse of a milk-boy, on a fish being found in the milk—"Please, sir, mother forgot to strain the water"—was one of those which did frequent duty. He left on one occasion a parcel of stinking fish, which he had carried about with him, and forgotten, neatly done up in paper, in a fashionable thoroughfare in Scotland, and stood at the hotel window to watch the face of the first person who examined it.

Throughout his journeys specimens of every kind, living, dying and dead, were thrown into his bag, possibly to keep company with his boots or his clothes. The odor of his bag usually increased with the length of the inspection, and on one occasion, when it was exceptionally offensive, he said to the boots of a very smart hotel, "I think you had better put this bag into the cellar, as I should not be at all surprised if it smelt by to-morrow morning."

His best things, he used to say himself, were written on the box of an omnibus or in a railway carriage. "The Royal Academy without a Catalogue" was written between London and Crewe, and posted at the latter station. He had originally acquired the art of writing in a railway train from the late Bishop of Oxford.

He thought that he had facts at his disposal which would have enabled him to answer the great doctrines which Mr. Darwin had unfolded. Evolution was eminently distasteful to him; only two days before his death, in revising the preface of his latest work, he deliberately expressed his disbelief in it, and he used to dispose of any controversy on the subject by saying: "My father was Dean of Westminster; I was brought up in the principles of Church and State; and I will never admit it—I will never admit it."

Perhaps no man ever lived with a kinder heart. It may be doubted whether he ever willingly said a hard word or did a hard action. He used to say of one gentleman, by whom he thought he had been aggrieved, that he had forgiven him seventy times seven already; so that he was not required to forgive him any more. He could not resist a cry of distress, particularly if it came from a woman. Women, he used to say, are such doe-like, timid things that he could not bear to see them unhappy. One night, walking from his office, he found a poor servant girl crying in the street. She had been turned out of her place that morning as unequal to her duties; she had no money, and no friends nearer than Taunton, where her parents lived. Mr. Buckland took her to an eating-house, gave her a dinner, drove her to Paddington, paid for her ticket, and left her in charge of the guard of the train. His nature was so simple and generous that he did not even then seem to realize that he had done an exceptionally kind action.

A volume might perhaps be filled with an account of Mr. Buckland's eccentricities. When he was studying oysters, he would never allow anyone to speak; the oysters, he said, overheard the conversation and shut up their shells. More inanimate objects than oysters were endowed by him with sense. He had almost persuaded himself that inanimate things could be spiteful; and he used to say that he would write a book on their spitefulness. If a railway lamp did not burn properly he would declare it was sulky, and throw it out of the window to see if it could find a better master. He punished his portmanteau on one occasion by knocking it down, and the portmanteau naturally revenged itself by breaking all the bottles of specimens which it contained, and emptying their contents on his master's shirts. To provide himself against possible disasters, he used to carry with him an armory of implements. On the herring inquiry he went to Scotland with six boxes of cigars, four dozen pencils, five knives, and three thermometers. On his return three weeks afterward, he produced one solitary pencil, the remnant of all this property. The knives were lost, the cigars were smoked; one thermometer had lost its temper, and been thrown out of a window; another had been drowned in the Pentland Frith, and a third had beaten out its own brains against the bottom of a gunboat. No human being could have told the fate of the pencils.

THE DUKE OF CONNAUGHT AND THE IRISHMAN.

From London Society.

All classes in Ireland are fond of grandeur and circumstance; and the establishment of a Royal residence there would have a most beneficial effect. During the stay of the Duke of Connaught in the country, he was, as usual, very affable, and won golden opinions among rich and poor. I was told that one day when he was standing at the door of a hotel, a tatterdemalion came up to him, and with native assurance called out:

"Welcome to Ireland, your Royal Highness! I hope I see your Royal Highness well."

"Quite well. I am much obliged to you," replied the Duke.

"And your Royal mother the Queen?" continued the man. "I hope she is also enjoying good health?"

"Yes, thank you," returned the Duke; "the Queen is very well."

"I'm glad to hear it, your Royal Highness. And how are your Royal brothers?"

"Get along there, fellow!" said one of the aide-de-camps, who happened to come up at that moment.

"What are you interfering with me for, sir?" retorted the tatterdemalion, much affronted. "Don't you see that I'm houlding a conversation with his Royal Highness?"